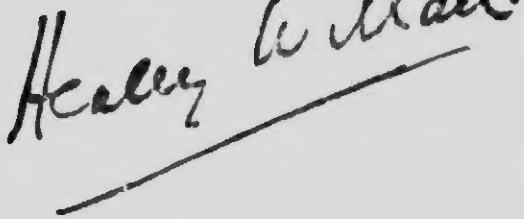
Henry Wilson



THE DEAD KING

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BY

RUDYARD KIPLING

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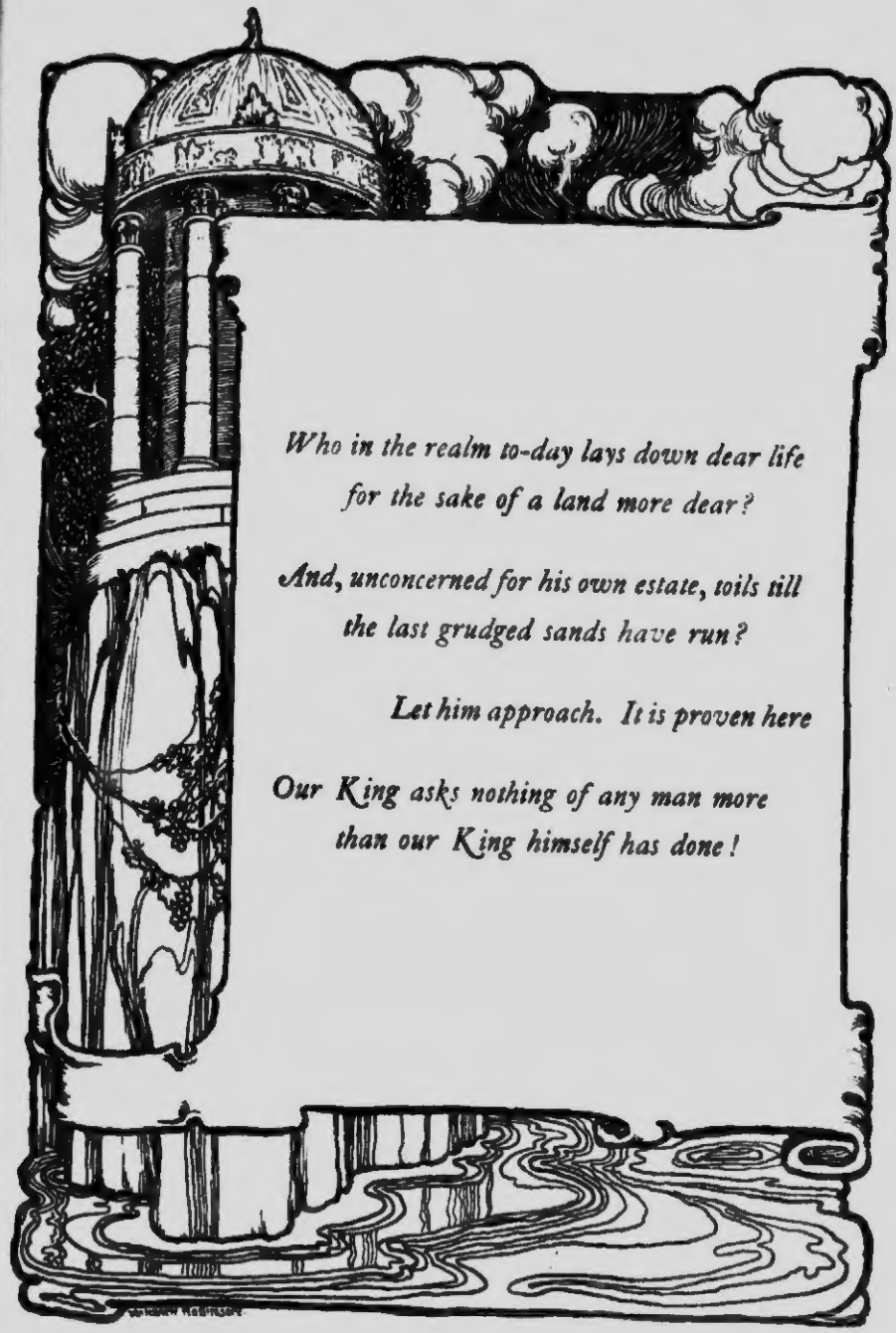

Who in the realm to-day lays down dear life
for the sake of a land more dear?

And, unconcerned for his own estate, toils till
the last grudged sands have run?

Let him approach. It is proven here

Our King asks nothing of any man more
than our King himself has done!

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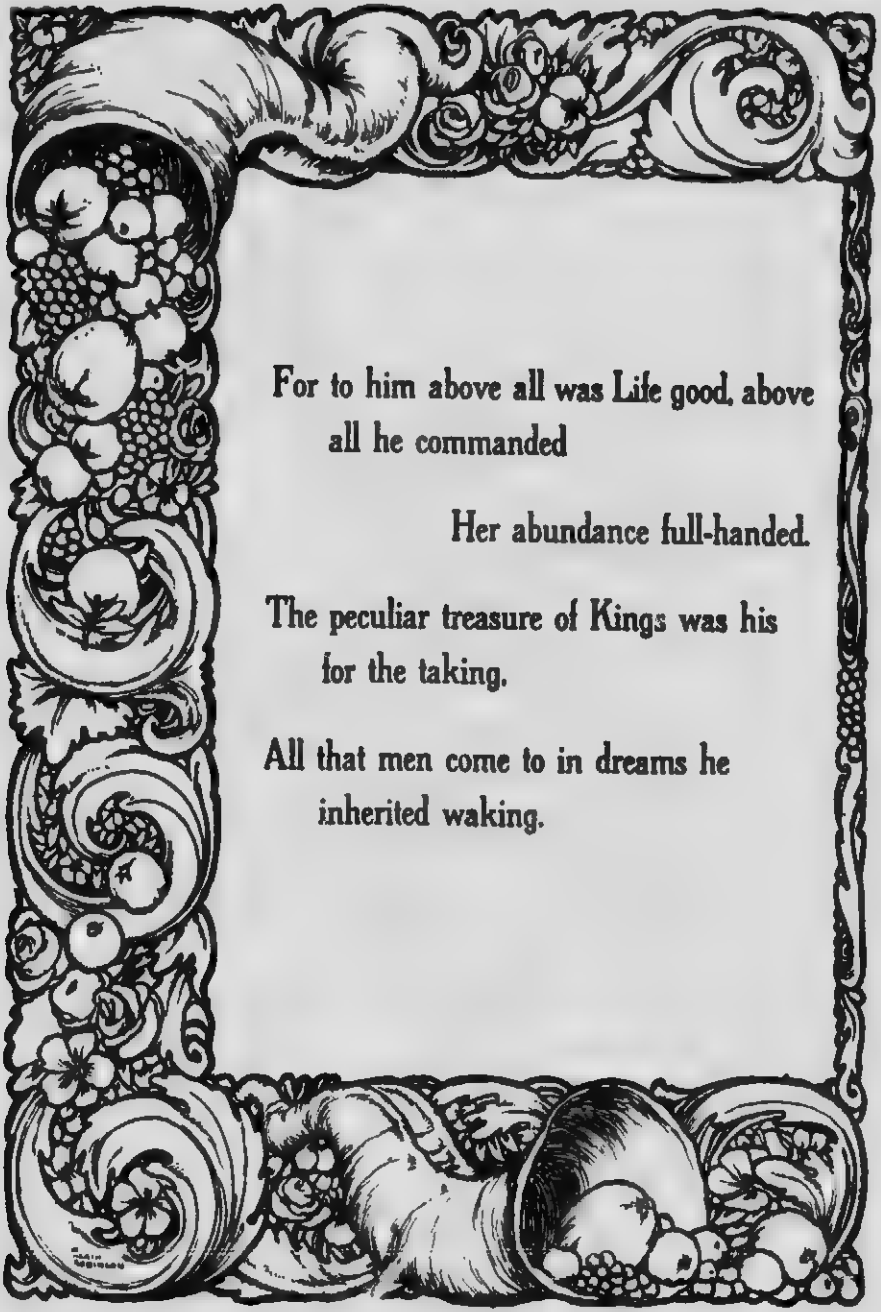
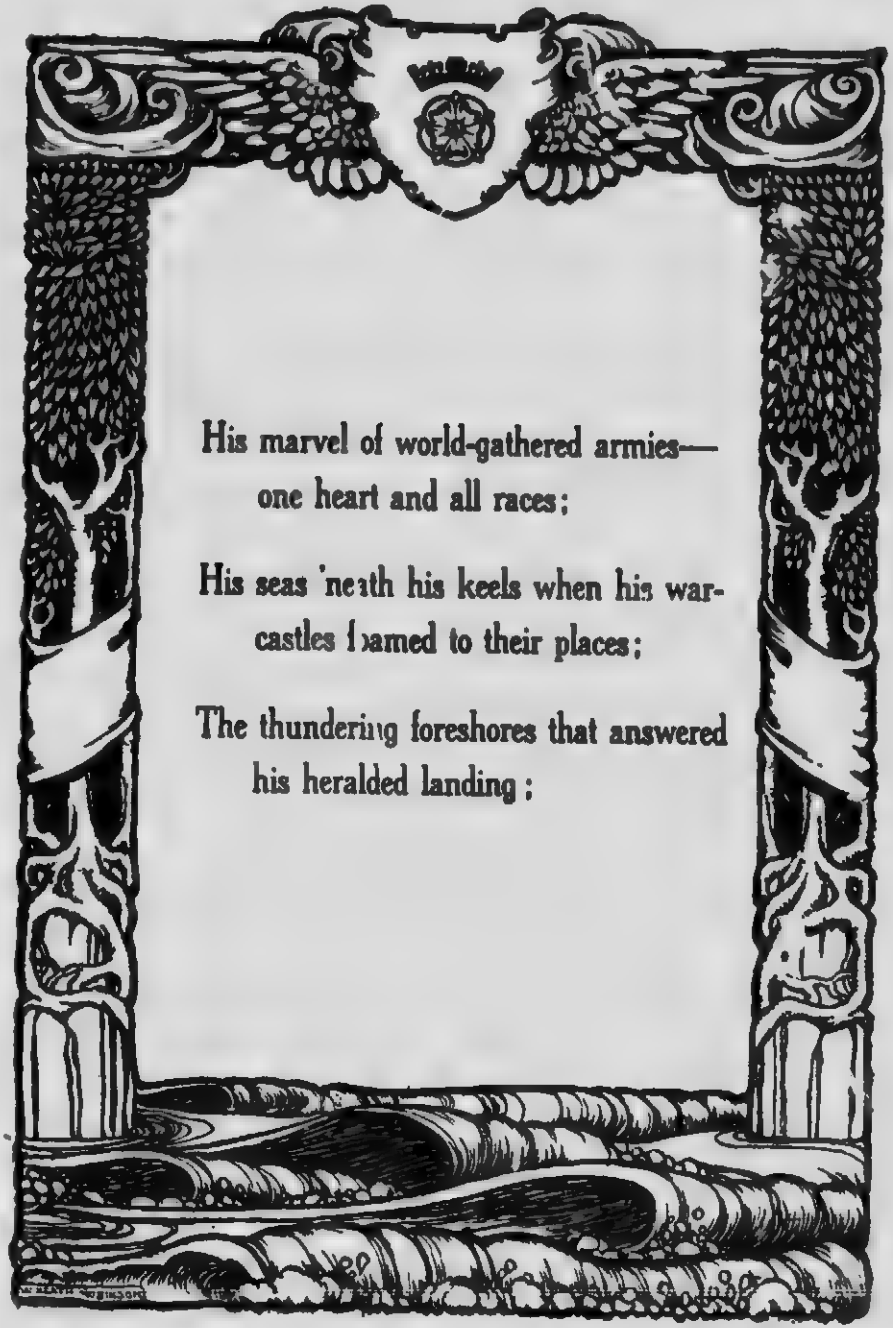


For to him above all was Life good, above
all he commanded

Her abundance full-handed.

The peculiar treasure of Kings was his
for the taking.

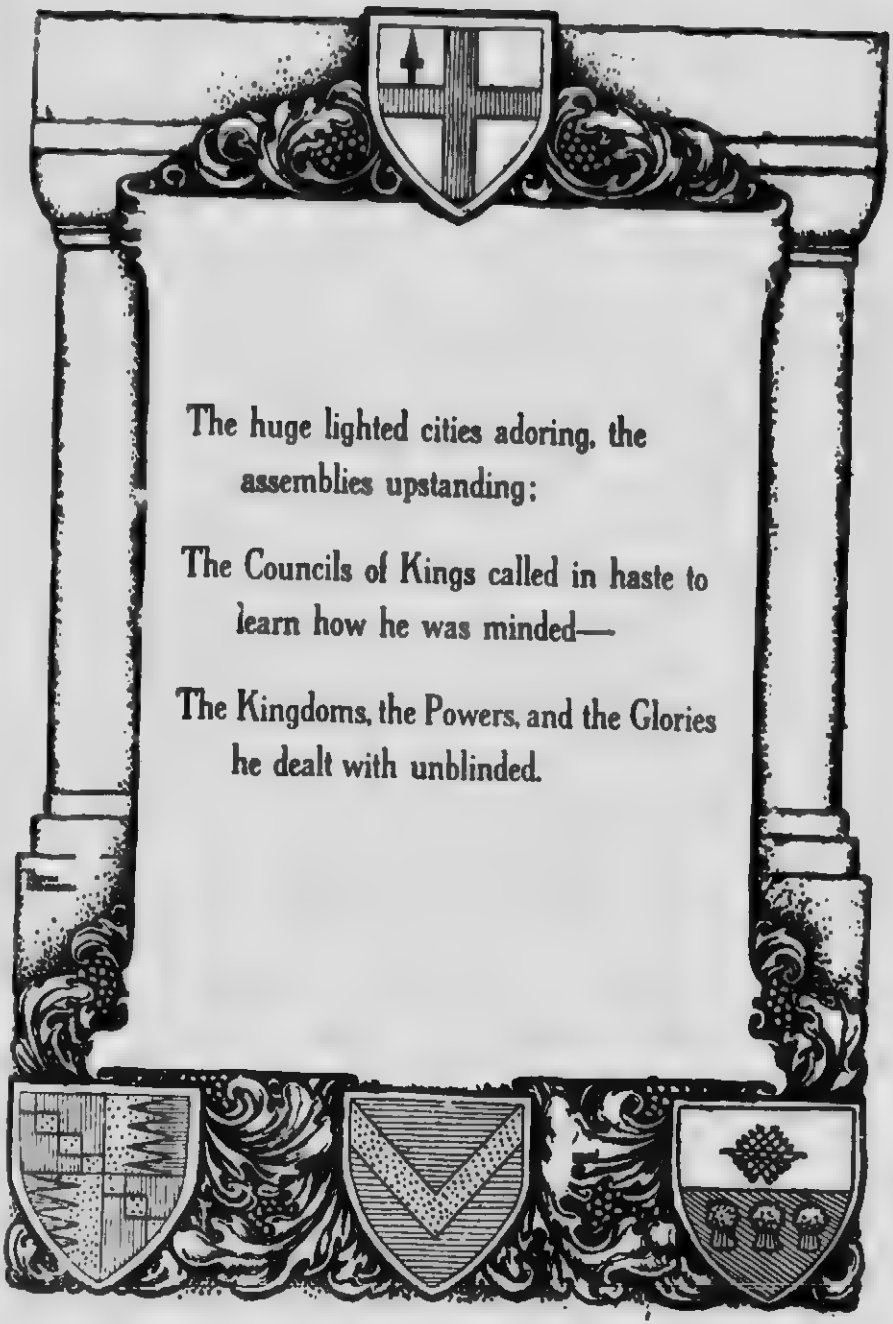
All that men come to in dreams he
inherited waking.



His marvel of world-gathered armies—
one heart and all races;

His seas 'neath his keels when his war-
castles foamed to their places;

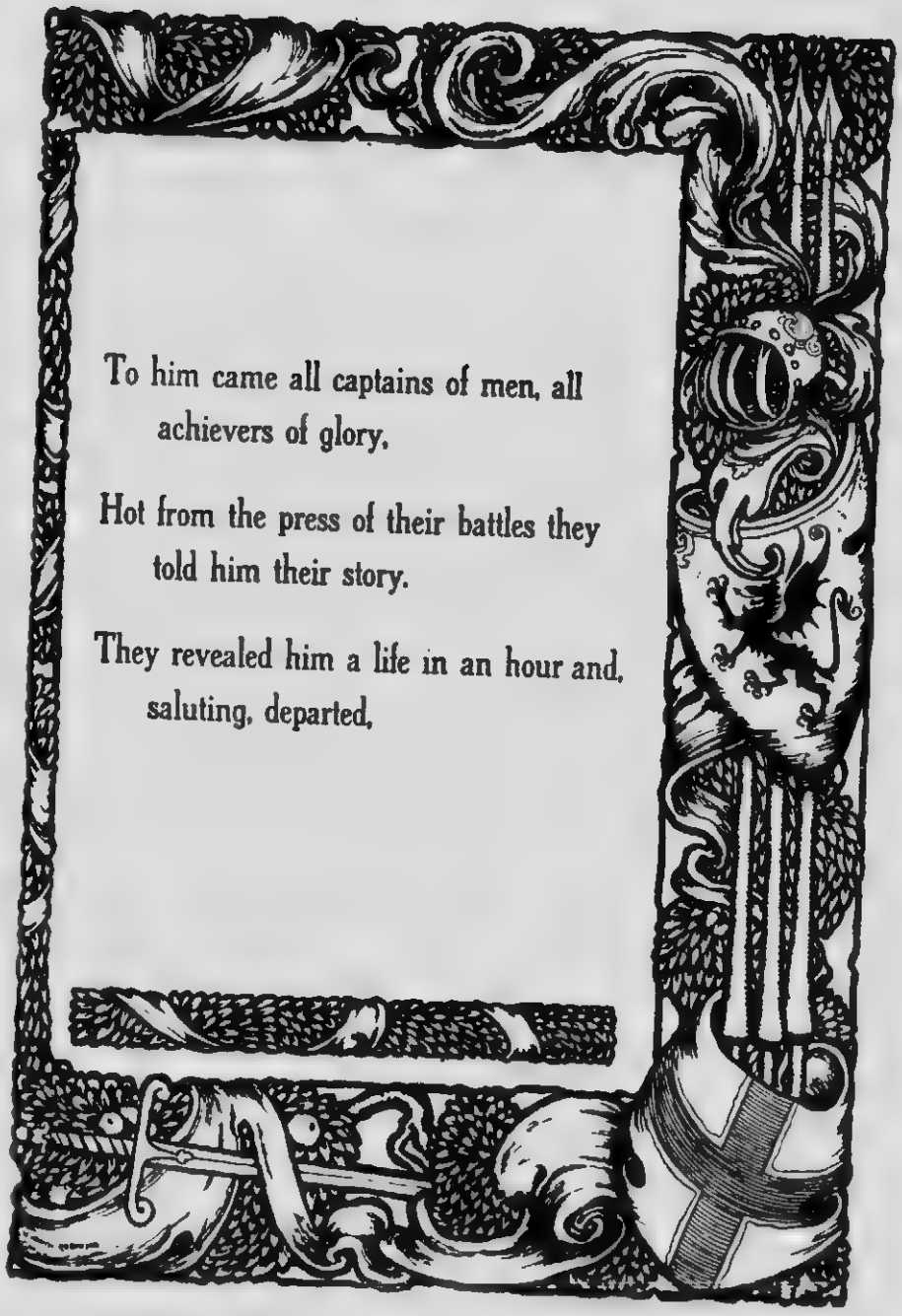
The thundering foreshores that answered
his heralded landing;



The huge lighted cities adoring, the
assemblies upstanding;

The Councils of Kings called in haste to
learn how he was minded—

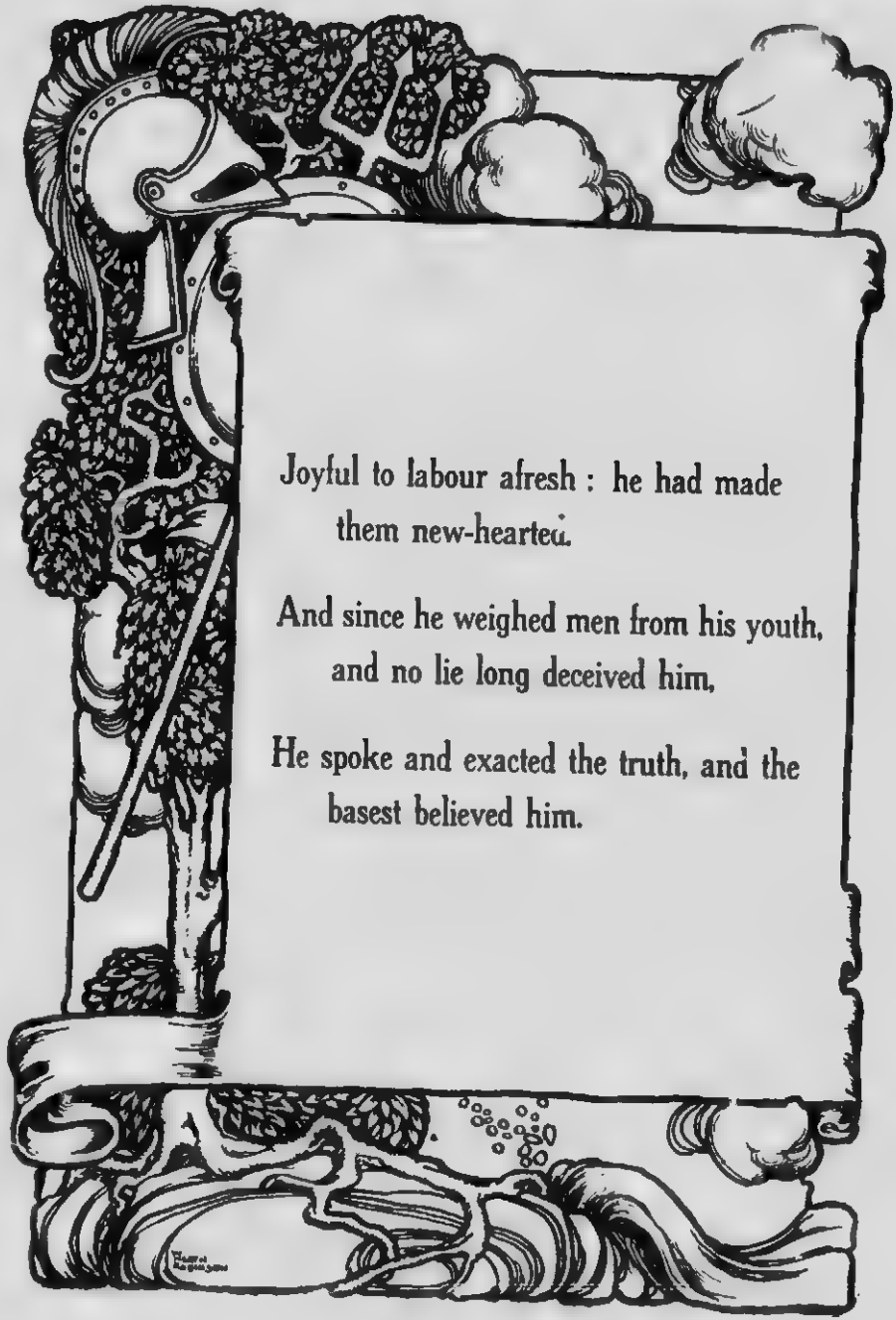
The Kingdoms, the Powers, and the Glories
he dealt with unblinded.



To him came all captains of men, all
achievers of glory,

Hot from the press of their battles they
told him their story.

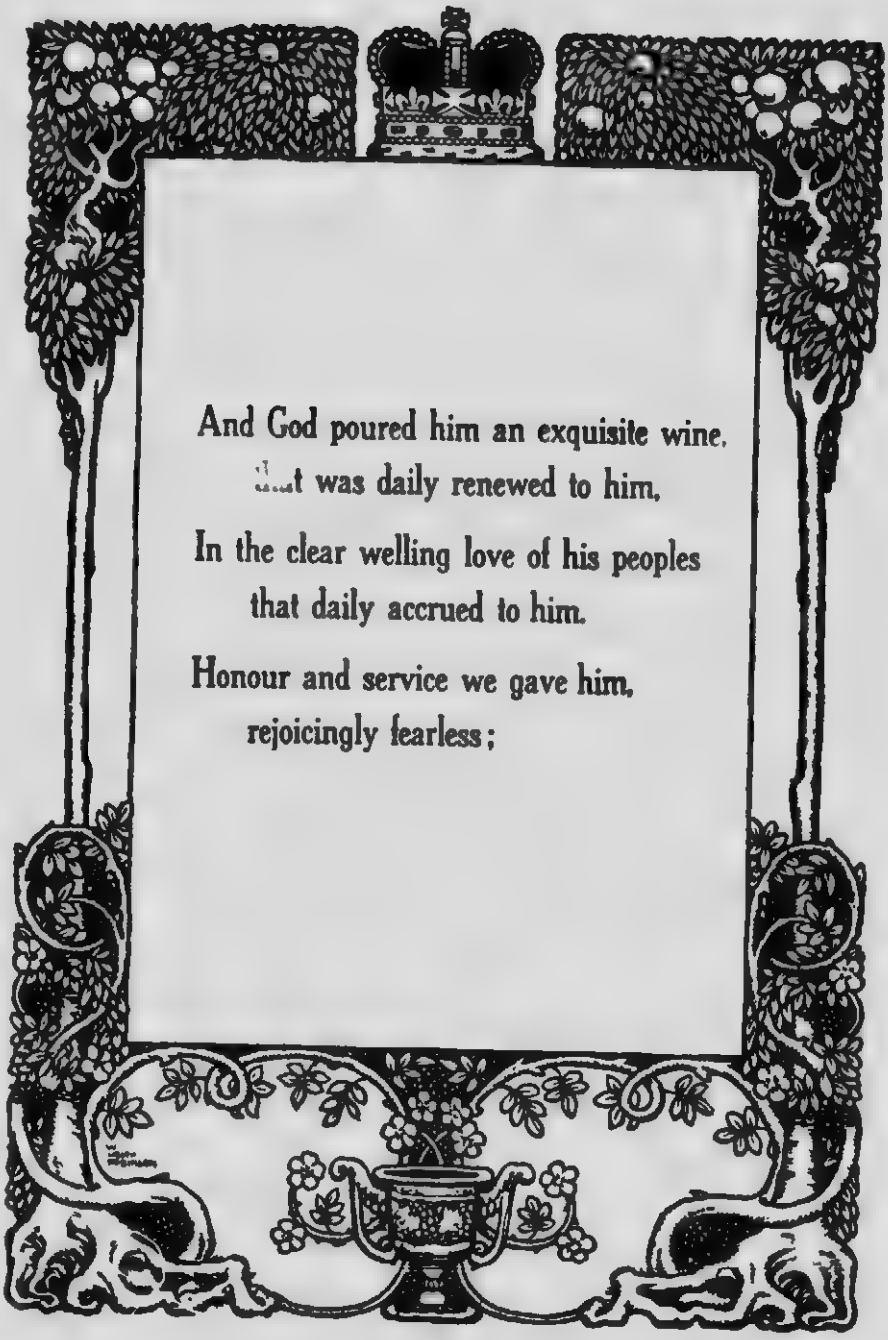
They revealed him a life in an hour and,
saluting, departed,



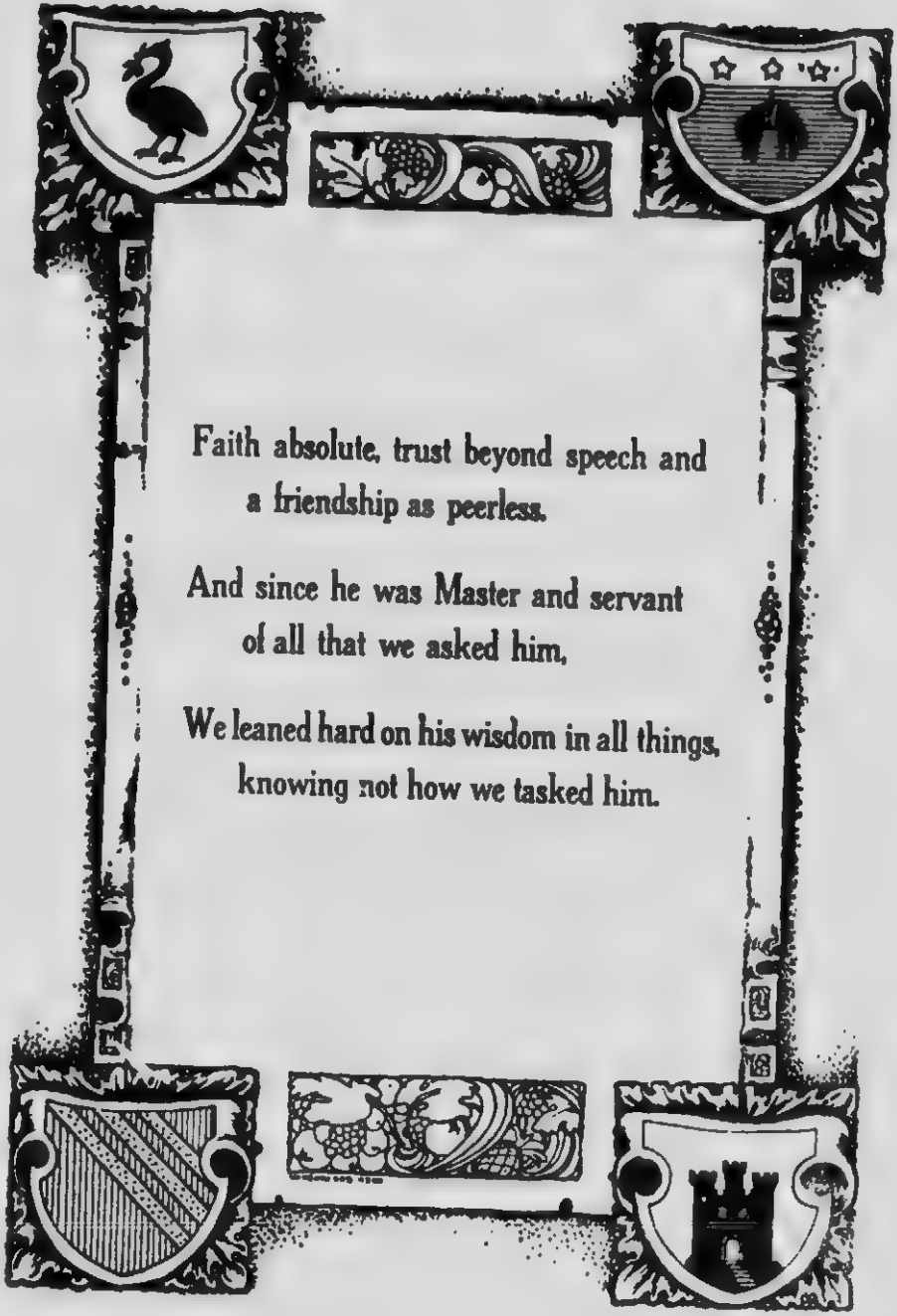
Joyful to labour afresh : he had made
them new-hearted.

And since he weighed men from his youth,
and no lie long deceived him,

He spoke and exacted the truth, and the
basest believed him.



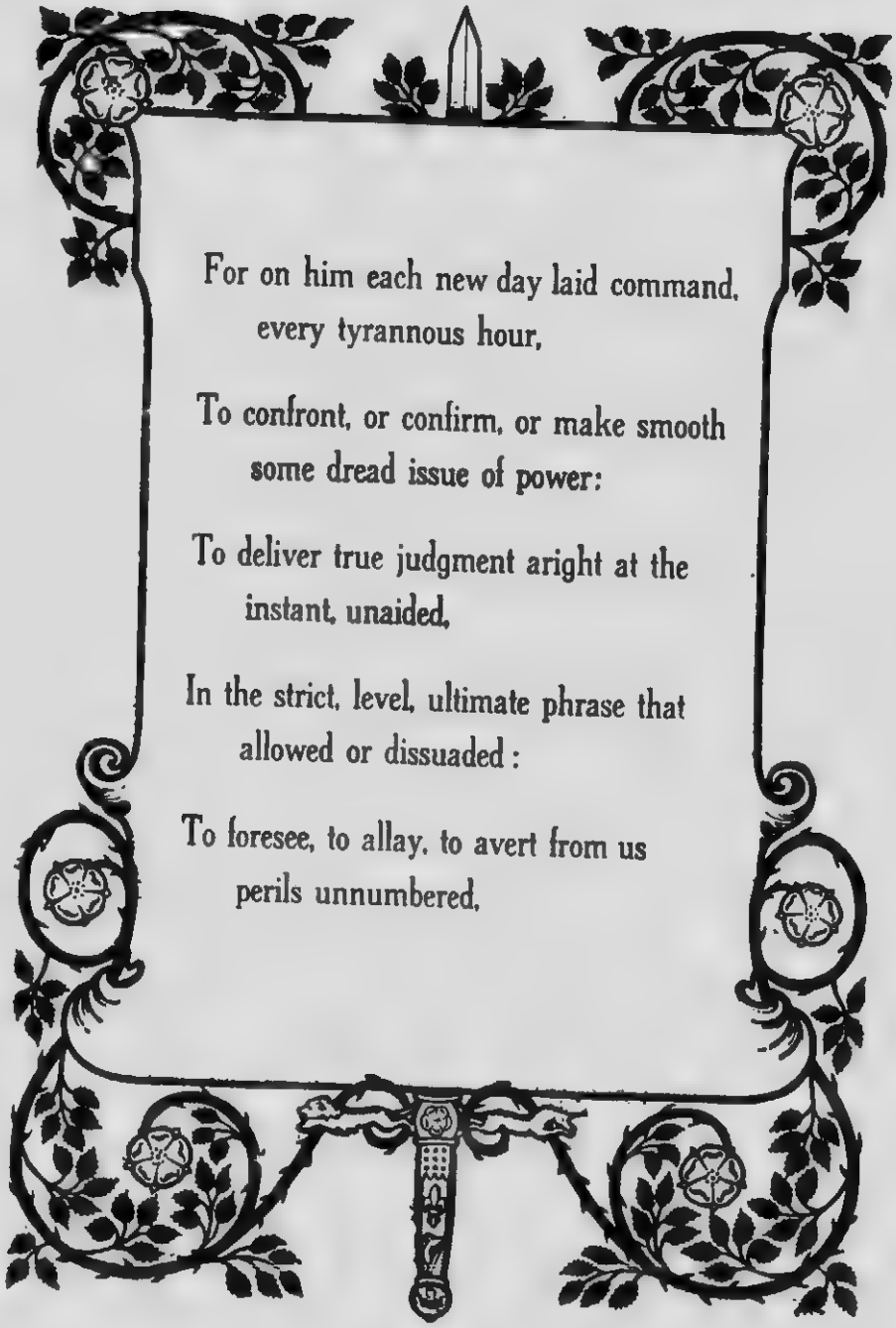
And God poured him an exquisite wine,
That was daily renewed to him,
In the clear welling love of his peoples
that daily accrued to him.
Honour and service we gave him,
rejoicingly fearless;



Faith absolute, trust beyond speech and
a friendship as peerless.

And since he was Master and servant
of all that we asked him,

We leaned hard on his wisdom in all things,
knowing not how we tasked him.



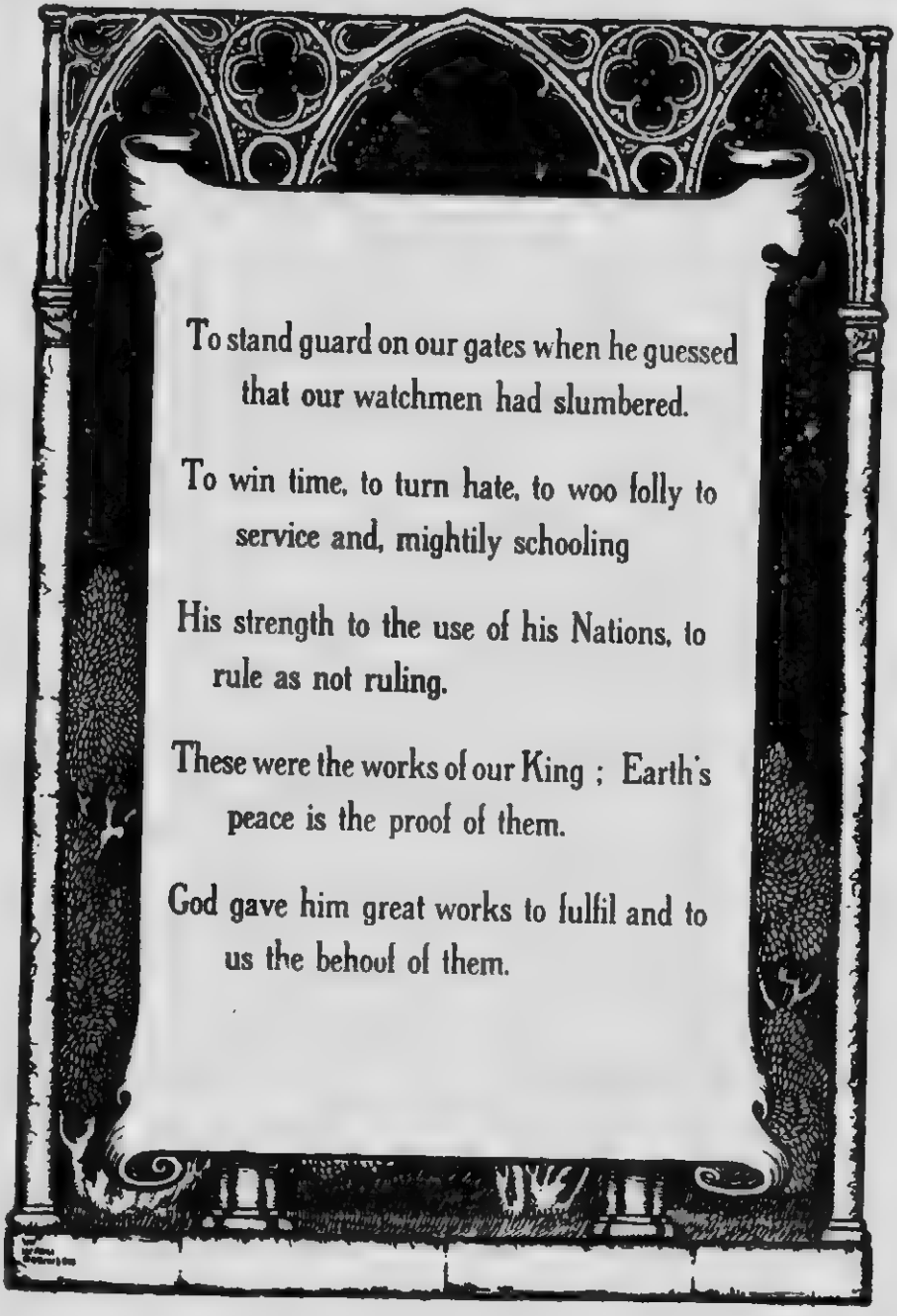
For on him each new day laid command, every tyrannous hour,

To confront, or confirm, or make smooth some dread issue of power:

To deliver true judgment aright at the instant, unaided,

In the strict, level, ultimate phrase that allowed or dissuaded:

To foresee, to allay, to avert from us perils unnumbered,



To stand guard on our gates when he guessed
that our watchmen had slumbered.

To win time, to turn hate, to woo folly to
service and, mightily schooling

His strength to the use of his Nations, to
rule as not ruling.

These were the works of our King ; Earth's
peace is the proof of them.

God gave him great works to fulfil and to
us the behoof of them.

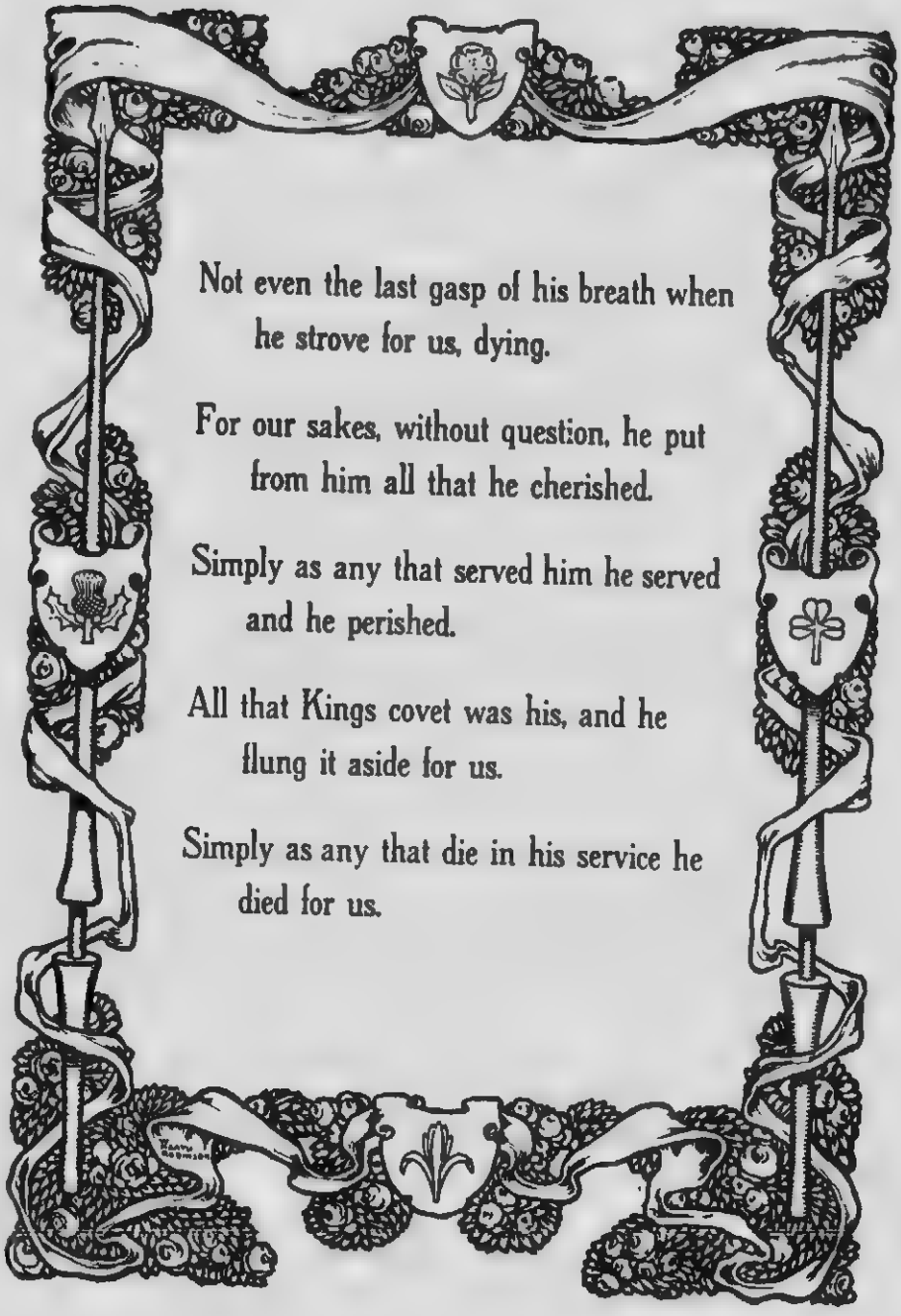
We accepted his toil as our right—none spared, none excused him.

When he was bowed by his burden his rest was refused him.

We troubled his age with our weakness—the blacker our shame to us!

He heard that his people had need of him; straightway he came to us.

As he received so he gave—nothing grudged, naught denying.



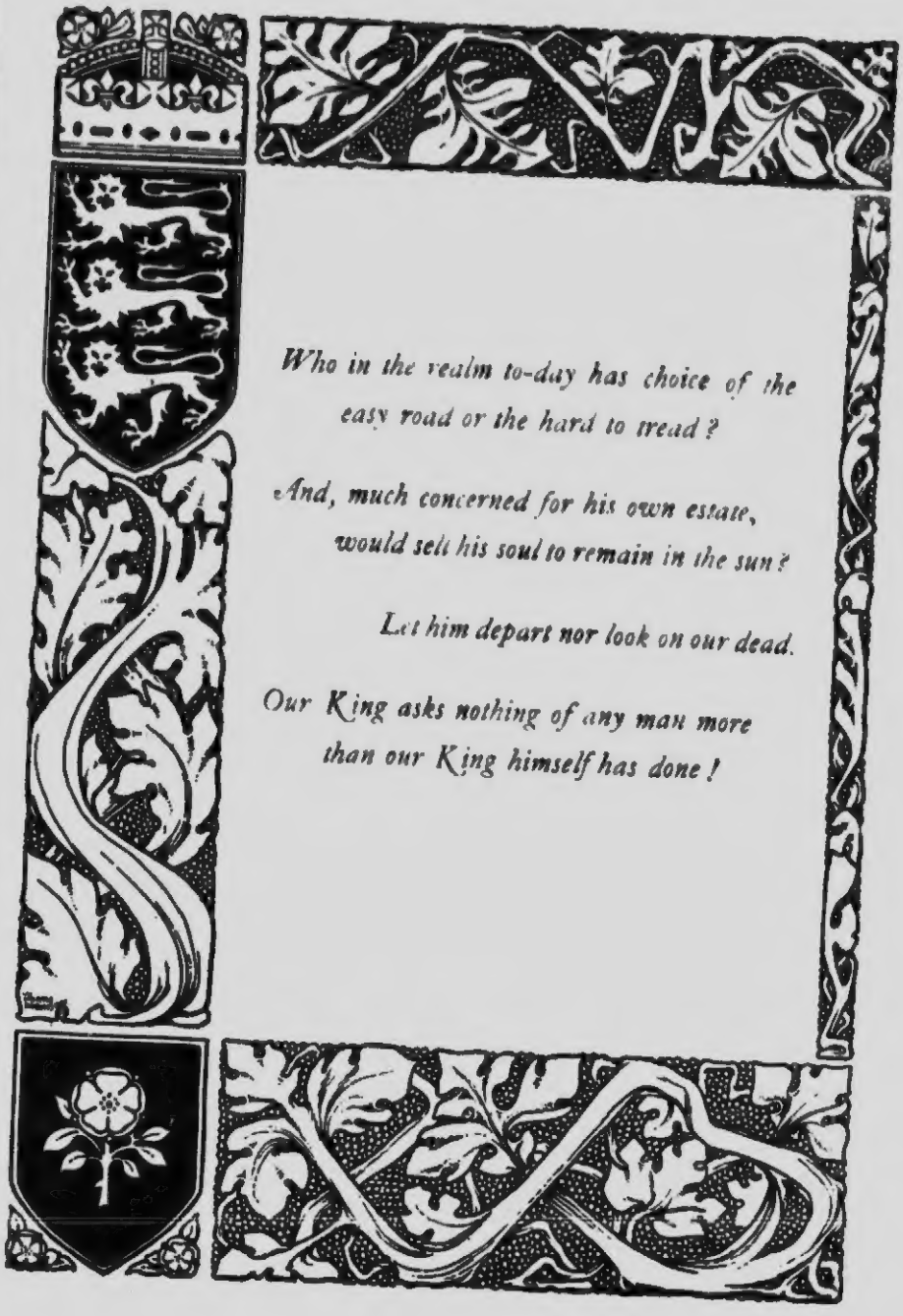
Not even the last gasp of his breath when
he strove for us, dying.

For our sakes, without question, he put
from him all that he cherished.

Simply as any that served him he served
and he perished.

All that Kings covet was his, and he
flung it aside for us.

Simply as any that die in his service he
died for us.

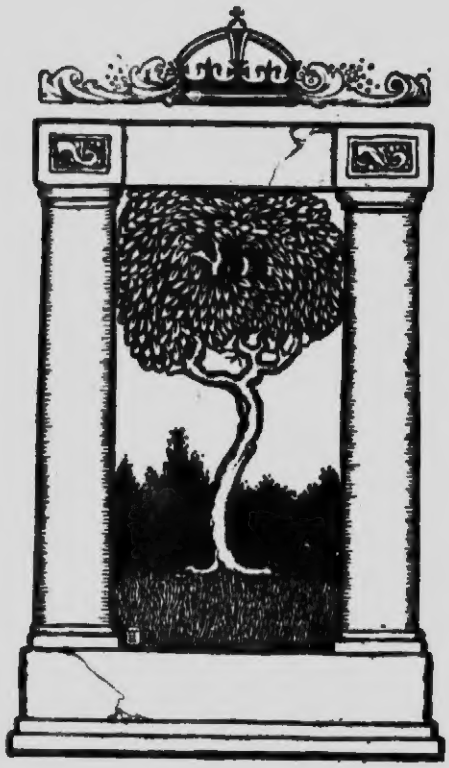


Who in the realm to-day has choice of the
easy road or the hard to tread?

And, much concerned for his own estate,
would sell his soul to remain in the sun?

Let him depart nor look on our dead.

Our King asks nothing of any man more
than our King himself has done!



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